

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

We fully support the National Translator Association's petition to "Add a Rural Translator Service".

RURAL TELEVISION SYSTEM has assisted small rural communities in Public Telecommunication Projects for rural areas in six Western States (Nevada, Montana, N. California, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona) for over 18-years. Many of these were NTIA/PTFP federally funded projects and most are still in operation serving their communities and contemplating the conversion to digital in the future. Another 100 or so small communities wished to participate over the 17-years, but it was necessary to have a Construction Permit BEFORE Federal assistance was made available; we were usually unable to get the grant and the CP to happen at the same time because of the FCC Window process. Recently, because of the advancements in lower cost computer technology, we have been able to build these facilities quickly and without Federal assistance. But now we can't get the CP's again in a timely fashion.

These rural telecommunication facilities (a LPTV station or Translator owned and operated by volunteers in the community) are now more important than ever as they constitute the ONLY WAY many of these communities can presently electronically "communicate to themselves" in an Emergency, or receive Emergency information from a regional source. As a real example, we have had public agencies such as the County Public Health organization and regional doctors use these facilities in the past to disseminate health information regarding virulent flu epidemics. With the recent SARS outbreaks, 9/11, and future world pandemics that are fully expected by the world health organizations to happen again, these facilities are now CRITICAL to the well-being of our rural population. There are many similar examples we could also present concerning Hazardous Materials spills, forest fires in the Western states a few years back, flooding, tornadoes, and etc.

At this very moment our County entities here in Jefferson County, Montana (School system, Public Health organization, County Telecommunications Task Force, and DES personnel), are collectively working to improve rural Emergency communications by getting cable TV coverage in areas covered by translators but not presently carried on the cable. We also need two translators to cover parts of the County not presently served by our local LPTV station to complete this coverage. This important NTA proposal, if successful, would help us provide emergency communication to these very small communities as well. This same situation occurs in the many other rural communities, Counties, and States that we serve.

Thank you.

Lee V. Good  
RURAL TELEVISION SYSTEM (RTS)